

Adelphian Apartments (Jordan Hotel)  
820 O'Farrell Street  
San Francisco  
San Francisco County  
California

HABS No. CA-2344

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94107

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADELPHIAN APARTMENTS  
(JORDAN HOTEL)

HABS NO. CA-2344

Location: 820 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco, San Francisco County,  
California, 94109

Significance: The Adelphian Apartments (Jordan Hotel) is a contributor to the San Francisco Apartment Hotel District, which has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the statewide level of significance, under Criteria A-events and C-architecture, as "perhaps the country's only large, virtually intact, architecturally consistent, densely packed inner-city residential area" (Nomination form, block 8). The district's period of significance is 1906 to 1931. The year of significance for this building is 1915, when it was constructed. The Adelphian Apartments is also a good example of the district's "predominant building type: a 3- to 7-story, multi-unit, permanent residential apartment, hotel, or apartment-hotel constructed of brick or reinforced concrete" (Nomination, block 7). In the 1983 National Register Nomination form for the San Francisco Apartment Hotel District, this building is listed among the contributors as No. 716/3, on continuation sheet page 107. The listing reads, "Adelphian Apartments (now Jordan Apartments), 820 O'Farrell Street: 1915, designer William Wilde, 4 stories, stucco facade, marquee, marble steps." Although somewhat modified on the interior and, because of a fire, at the rear east wing, the building is basically intact as to location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Nomination form describes the District's typical building in terms which apply directly to the Adelphian Apartments. "Compositionally the typical apartment or hotel is a two-part vertical block with prominent cornice, residential upper part, and differentiated base. . . . It stands on the sidewalk line and usually occupies the entire lot width of 30 to 150 feet. Light courts open at side and rear. It may have bay windows. Sash in the earlier buildings is most often double-hung. . . . Roofs are almost always flat and surrounded by parapet-firewalls, which provide compositional space for the decorative cornice" (Block 7). "Most designers chose to ornament their two-part vertical blocks with restrained references to a broadly Classical vocabulary" (p. 53). "Typically the apartment or hotel is entered a few steps up from the street. . . . The entry opening, vestibule and front are as imposing as the budget permitted. One finds curvilinear and glass-fringed metal marquees. . . . The lobby helped describe the social status of the residents and therefore became an important space" (p. 54).

The subject building is a curious example of the social status-seeking norm in the District. While the building was designed for low-rent tenants, (single room apartments, narrow halls, tiny lobby, minimal interior ornamentation with inexpensive materials), it presents a luxurious face to the public. The well-proportioned entry opening appears of normal height for its

style, but it actually rises considerably less than the full height of the main floor. Usually in the District, a vestibule or lobby steps up to the main floor in response to a hilly site, but here the site is flat. The steps have luxurious width and marble cladding. There is an unusually large number of steps--ten--which, along with the glass fringed, flat topped marquee and restricted opening, completely conceal the meager lobby and cramped quarters. The building's design thus seems directed to tenants of severely limited means who wished to give an outward impression of respectability and prosperity.

Description: The Adelphian Apartments building is a 54 unit, four story, high basement reinforced concrete structure with facade of stucco and metal. It is located at the western edge of the San Francisco Apartment Hotel District, between a large new building and a 1982 park; its rear is on an alley named Myrtle Street. The facade is a Chicago style two-part vertical block with modified Italian Renaissance ornamentation.

The building's condition is fair to good; it is about to be rehabilitated as housing for the homeless. The only alterations apparent on the exterior are a security grill at the vestibule's sidewalk entry, loss of the marquee ceiling, some replaced basement doors, and new window sash in the fire-gutted rear east wing. Alterations to the interior include enclosure of the stairs at first floor front, fluorescent hall lighting fixtures, spray-on texture to the hall and lobby walls above wainscot, partitioning and some sheet-rocking in the basement, and remodeling of bathrooms and kitchens.

The building occupies its full lot, 63.5 x 120 feet, except for side and interior light wells. Sanborn maps show its height as 50 feet; the main or first floor is ten steps above the sidewalk. Four facade bay windows project over the sidewalk for the height of the top three floors, but they do not extend up into the cornice. The foundations, walls, and structure are of reinforced concrete. The mass of the building is penetrated in the center by a recessed vestibule, 8 feet wide and 18 feet deep, containing the ten steps up to the main floor, with landings at top and bottom. The single main door and the equal-sized sidelights are glazed and have wood borders. The facade is ordered symmetrically with six round headed casement windows on the first floor, two half buried basement doors, and four three-faceted bay windows alternating with two small plain windows and a fire escape on the upper floors. Most windows are double hung, but six are wood casements with semi-circular transoms. The roof is flat, or is otherwise invisible from the street because of the enclosing firewall/parapet.

For floor plans, see the enclosed copies from the original plans. The basement has stairs, toilet rooms, one large unfinished room, one small residential unit, and several utility rooms. Two staircases each have basically two legs, joined by a few steps on spiral; the front staircase is a little wider than the rear one. Flooring is wood and has had wall-to-wall carpet. The halls and staircases are wainscotted with simple varnished wood board and batten paneling. There is a simple stair rail with square balusters and uncomplicated square wood newell posts. Above the wainscot the halls and stairs have walls and ceilings with texture sprayed on over the original lath and plaster. A plain picture molding continues over the hall door surrounds. Unit doors are modern hollow core. Within the units some original paneled or glazed doors

remain. Interior window and door surrounds are simple. Unit walls and ceiling are lath and plaster.

The stucco facade is ornamented with a consoled cornice, four brackets, and a frieze. The base consists of the first floor and high basement; it is deeply rusticated and has radiating lintels. The large entry is framed with paneled pilasters and a plain lintel concealed by the marquee. The marquee is a rectangular box with molded metal frame and a fringe consisting of metal dividers and lozenge-pointed panes probably of thick glass but now painted. A double string course separates the base from the shaft of the composition. The string course projects perhaps a foot over the entry, supporting a fire escape and resting on brackets centered over the entry pilasters. Between string course and cornice frieze, the facade is plain except for simple rectangular spandrel panels. The bay window projections rest on the string course and terminate with an upright molding in the frieze. The exterior side walls and the rear wall on Myrtle Street (an alley) are unfinished concrete, painted.

#### History:

The Adelphian Apartments were constructed in 1915, according to the contract notice published in Edwards Abstracts on 20 March 1915. The original owners were Hermine Ludemann and Marie Schumacher, the contractor J.B. Reite, and cost of construction \$58,000.

The architect was William Wilde, who practiced in Oakland, California, 1909 to about 1916, and in San Francisco about 1916 to about 1928. The owners may have met him when they were living in Alameda after being burned out of San Francisco in 1906. Wilde's only other known building in San Francisco, the Canton Bank at 500 Montgomery Street, was designed in partnership with Otto Schindler.

The building appears always to have been about 55 apartments. Both the owner/manager Marie Schumacher and the architect William Wilde lived in the building at least until 1928. The 1920 census shows the owner's unit with five resident adults, and 54 additional units inhabited by single persons or married couples without children. Most of these tenants were office workers, in sales, or in skilled trades. They included three department store sales persons, a barber, and a junk store manager. Only four of the residents pursued occupations that could have been related to the extra-legal entertainment activities of the nearby Tenderloin area: a theater performer, a waitress, and two musicians. Altogether these occupants fit the generalized program of the building's design: tenants of limited means who wished to give the impression of respectability.

Owners of the property at the time of the building contract were Hermine Ludemann (widow of Adolph) and Marie or Maria Schumacher (wife of Ferdinand), probably mother and daughter. A hardware merchant, Adolph Ludemann had owned and lived on this property before 1880. The Schumachers were married here, and they were still living here at their 50th wedding anniversary in 1941.

Their family home had burned down in the 1906 earthquake fire, and the subject apartment building had replaced it. The property remained in Ludemann/Schumacher family ownership until 1961.

In relation to the San Francisco Apartment Hotel District, the Adelphian Apartments were constructed near the middle of the District's period of significance, 1906-1931. Among the 740 district contributors, 45% were put up before the subject building, 4% in the same year, 1915, and 51% subsequently. This apartment's very lower middle-class socio-economic target population is well within the parameters discussed in the District's Nomination.

The name "Adelphian Apartments" is given for this building in the San Francisco directories at least 1919 through 1962. "Jordan Apartments" is a more recent name, evidenced by a brass plaque beside the vestibule.

Sources:

"Building Contract Notices." Edwards Abstracts from Records, San Francisco, 20 March 1915.

Crocker-Langley or Polk. San Francisco Directory, 1879-1962, passim.

"Deaths." San Francisco Chronicle, 18 May 1945, 9/8.

Field survey. 24 June 1993.

"Fifty Years of Marriage." Chronicle, 21 July 1941, 11/7.

National Archives and Record Service. 14th Census 1920, Population Schedules, San Francisco, Enumeration District 204, p. 15B, 16A, 17A.

"San Francisco Apartment Hotel Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1983, California Office of Historic Preservation.

San Francisco Assessor. Sales Ledgers, 1914-1967, Block 716.

San Francisco Block Book. 1894, 107.

---. 1901, 123.

---. 1906, 447.

---. 1909, 447.

Project Information:

The foregoing HABS documentation has been prepared in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement among the Department of Housing and urban Development, the California Office of Historic Preservation, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, regarding the rehabilitation of the Jordan Hotel, San Francisco, California.

The rehabilitation is being conducted by Housing for Independent People, San Francisco, a California non-profit corporation, with architect Mr. Harry Ja Wong, principal architect with Asia Neighborhood Design, San Francisco. The project will effect the building in the following ways:

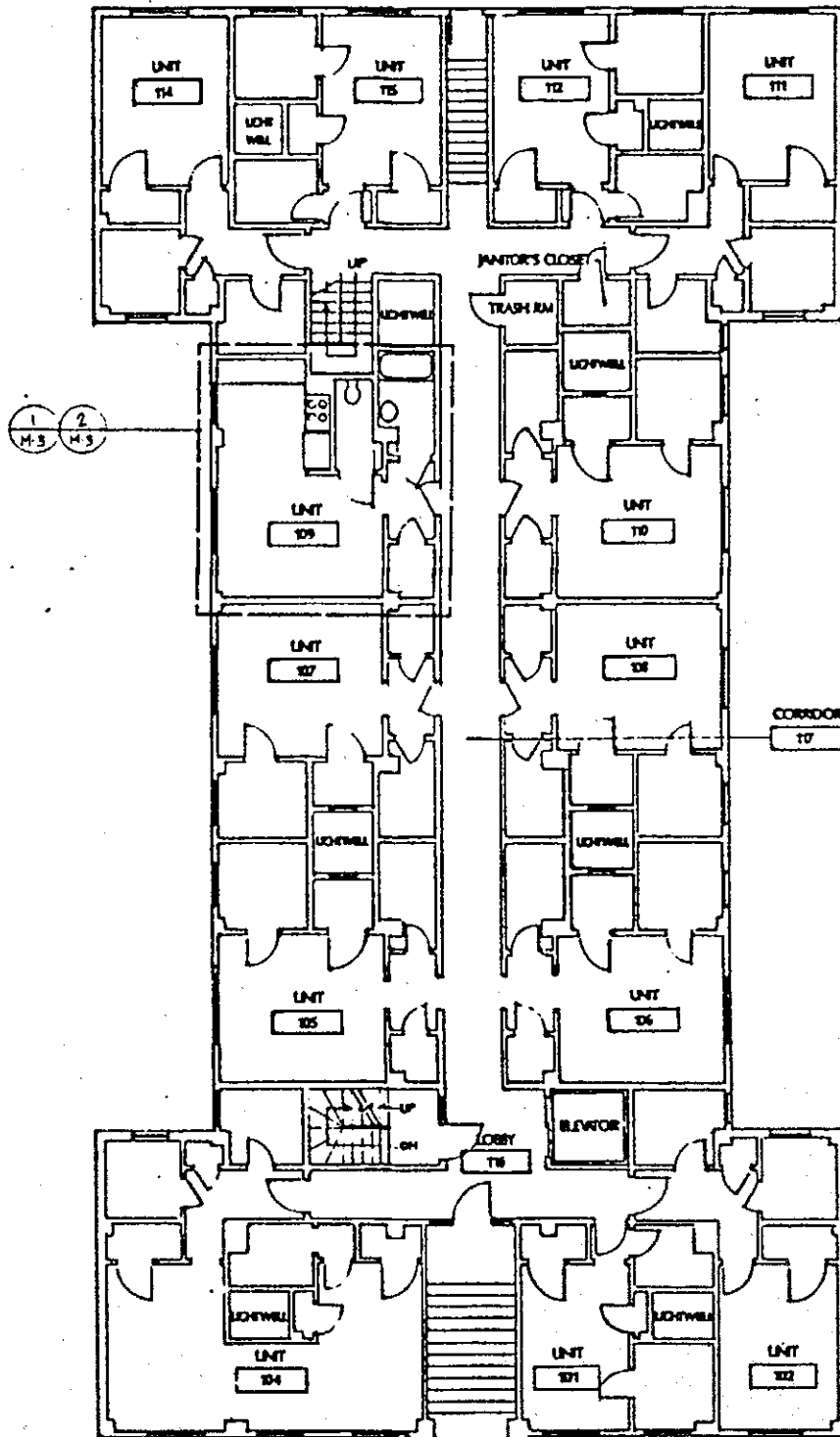
1. The west half of the vestibule stairs will be replaced with a handicapped lift. The marble fittings will be re-used.
2. One of the panels in the east wall of the vestibule, a panel already compromised, will be replaced with a window for security surveillance.
3. The security grill closing the originally open vestibule will be removed.
4. The marquee will be rehabilitated and given a new roof.
5. The basement will be altered for disabled access.
6. One unit on each floor (109, 209, 309, 409) will be altered for disabled access.
7. All seven exterior basement doors will be replaced; only one is original.
8. The elevator and its doors and trim will be replaced, with wider, accessible door housing.
9. Fire sprinklers and smoke alarms will be added, exposed except in the lobby, where the ceiling will be lowered to conceal them.
10. The building will be given life anew, with a use similar to the original use and security appropriate to the times.

Historian:

Anne Bloomfield

Anne Bloomfield Architectural History (consultant to Housing for Independent People)

July 1993



1st floor

